

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-5, 7-8, and 10-11 remain in this application, claims 2, 6, 9, and 12-17 are canceled, and new claims 18-19 are added. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

The allowance of claims 4, 8, 10, and 11 is noted with appreciation.

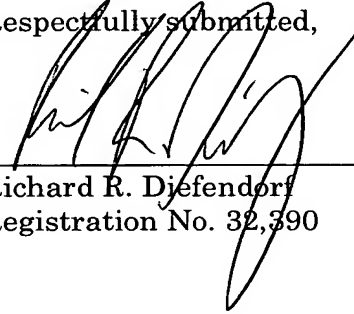
Independent claims 1 and 5 are rejected, along with dependent claims 3, 6, 7, and 9, as anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,893,845 to Bartholomew. Independent claims 1 and 5 are also rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 5,865,474 to Takahashi. Reconsideration of these rejections is requested.

Currently amended claims 1 and 5 define each of the plugs for receiving the first coupler halves as held in its own orifice in the wall, and the first coupler halves as locked in the bracket and fastened in the plugs. In the Bartholomew adapter, the tubular conduits 26 and 28, considered "plugs" by the Examiner, are both held in a single opening 14 in firewall 12 and, therefore, each conduit 26, 28 is not "held in its own orifice" as claims 1 and 5 require. In the Takahashi device, pipes 8, considered "first coupler halves" by the Examiner, are brazed or bonded to a surface 6a of plate portion 6, identified by the Examiner as the "bracket," and therefore are not "locked in the bracket" as claims 1 and 5 require. Currently amended claims 1 and 5, therefore, distinguish the invention from the Bartholomew and Takahashi patents previously relied on by the Examiner, and it is respectfully submitted that claims 1 and 5 are patentable. Dependent claims 3, 6, 7, and 9 are patentable as well.

New claims 18 and 19 are added to encompass a configuration in which second coupler halves of two coupler halves are directly fastened to the first coupler halves. Claims 18 and 19 are also dependent claims and should also be patentable. All claims in this application, therefore, are now patentable.

This application is now in condition for allowance. If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard R. Diefendorf
Registration No. 32,390

Date: May 5, 2005

CROWELL & MORING LLP
Intellectual Property Group
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
RRD:rd